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## DOWN THE EUPHRATES VALLEY. I.

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The natural point from which to start on a caravan journey down the Euphrates is Aleppo, 100 miles inland from Alexandretta. Here it is possible to obtain stores and provisions of almost every description and as this city is the centre of the land trade with Baghdad, horses, mules and camels can be more easily obtained here than at any other place.

The Aleppo of to-day is a modern city, possessing few interesting land-marks. The castle, however, cannot be overlooked, since it is unique as a fortification. It is a circular mound, perhaps a half mile in diameter at the top, surrounded, or rather hemmed in, by a massive wall of cut stone about 200-250 feet in height. Outside of the wall is a broad moat, the greater part of which is cut out of the solid rock. Its depth is from 40-60 feet. If well defended, this fortress would be as impregnable as Gibraltar. The common belief among the people is that it is filled with stores of war. I do not know whether this is true or not. Permission to visit the castle can be obtained from the Wali through the consuls. An escort of soldiers is always furnished. The date of the building of the mound is unknown. The walls belong to the 5th or 6th century A. D. Saladin captured it in 1183.

On account of the large quarries in the immediate neighborhood, almost all of the houses are built of cut stone. The newer portion of the town, Azizieh, reminds one of a European city. This is the Christian quarter and the majority of the well-to-do citizens wear the so-called Frank or European dress, with the exception of the head-gear. There is a good hotel in this part of the city, called Hotel Azizieh. It compares favorably with the second class hotels of Paris or London. The only other hotel in Aleppo is in the centre of the bazaars. As it is in the Moslem quarter and surrounded on all sides by noisy tradesmen, it cannot be recommended very highly.

Between Azizieh and the city gate of the Moslem quarter lies the infidels', *i. e.* Christian and Jewish, cemetery. The tombs form an interesting study. One finds English, Latin, French, Hebrew and Arabic inscriptions. I was surprised to see so many English names. They belong, however, to the 16th and 17th centuries, when the commerce of the city was in the hands of English companies. These tombstones are unpretentious and all of them are laid flat, since it is against the laws of the Turkish Empire to erect a monument to an infidel.

The bazaars are in the Moslem quarter. They are strictly oriental in appearance, as much so as those of Baghdad. I was much more impressed with the size and beauty of the Aleppo bazaars than with those of any other Turkish city. The bazaars in the Moslem quarter of Smyrna are insignificant in comparison with those in Aleppo and Baghdad. The greater part of the business is under the control of the Christians. The Armenians are regarded as the best traders in the east. The following expressive sentence, which may or may not be taken as complimentary to the Armenians, is often heard: "A Jew can cheat a Turk; a Greek can cheat a Jew and an Armenian can cheat a Greek." With Scanderoun (Alexandretta) as its seaport, Aleppo has a large

commerce with Europe. All of the large caravans for Baghdad receive their stores and start from this point.

The population of Aleppo is about 125,000, of which 100,000 are Moslems, 20,000 Christians and 5,000 Jews. Among the Christians, there are very few Protestants. They belong for the most part to the Greek and Catholic churches. Sunday is kept as on the continent. Everybody goes to the morning service and the remainder of the day is spent in pleasure. The language of the people is Arabic. Only the traders know Turkish. A great many of the Christians speak French and Italian, which they learn in the Jesuit schools.

After a month's stay in Aleppo, our caravan started down the Euphrates Valley for Baghdad. To Meskeneh, the site where the caravan route first touches the Euphrates is a ride of 18 hours. It may be well to explain here that a caravan hour is  $2\frac{3}{4}$ –3 English miles, and that 8 caravan hours is considered a good day's journey. Convenient way-stations between Aleppo and Meskeneh are (1) Jebrîn, a small dome village of about 150 houses, and (2) Dêr Hafr, a miserable collection of mud huts on the very edge of the so-called desert. The former is only 2 hours from Aleppo, but, as it is extremely difficult to get a large caravan into motion, on account of the laziness and indecision of the muleteers, this is enough for the first day. Dêr Hafr is 8 hours from Jebrîn and Meskeneh 8 hours from Dêr Hafr. Meskeneh was originally only a Turkish fort erected by Midhat Pasha to hold the Bedawin in check. At present there are several buildings connected with it and in the near future it may become a promising village. Steamers were brought by Midhat Pasha up the Euphrates to this point. One hour from Meskeneh are the ruins of Kala'at Balis or Barbalissus, called by the natives Old Meskeneh. The ruins are of an Arabic city and they cover a large extent. The most important is a large octagonal minaret almost perfectly preserved, the height of which is from 100–110 feet. It is of burnt white brick and has seven sets of windows, one above another. The top can be reached by a staircase of 110 steps. Four sets of inscriptions run around this tower. At its base, there are numerous subterranean passages like those on the hill above Smyrna. I also saw a fine capital of soft white gypsum. Two and one-half hours further on, at the end of the plateau of gypsum through which the Euphrates has found its way, is Tel or Kala'at Dibsi. It stands on the edge of a cliff and occupies an impregnable position. Prof. Peters would identify this Dibsi with the biblical Tiphshah. Between Balis and Dibsi there is good hunting. Francolins are very abundant and the jungles along the Euphrates are full of wild boars. Dibsi can be reached by following the river bank through the jungles or by crossing the plateau. The first is the easier of the two. Abû-Hariri the next government station is 4 hours from Dibsi or  $7\frac{1}{2}$  from Meskeneh. Here it may be remarked that almost all of these forts are extremely dirty and uncomfortable. It is much better to pitch tents in their immediate vicinity so as to be under their protection than to make use of these hovels.

One hour from Abû-Hariri, numerous large tombs can be seen cut out of the gypsum. There is also a large cave, similar to a tunnel, through which one can ride. Only five minutes from these tombs, there are extensive ruins. A portion of a minaret—50 feet high—is still standing. There are many walls of buildings 6–8 feet high. These ruins also bear the name Abû-Hariri. After this, nothing of interest is passed during the remainder of the day's journey. El-Hammâm is the next caravan station, 8 hours, 40 minutes from Abû-Hariri. There are neither barracks nor ruins here. Sachau, however, must have found

ruins and a fort in the vicinity, as he identifies Tiphsah with the El-Hammâm of to-day. The jungles here are full of lions according to the stories of the natives and the soldiers. Fires were built and a sharp watch kept. From El-Hammâm to the next station, El-Sabâh a fort, without any village, is a long and dreary ride of 10 hours and 45 minutes. Nothing of interest is to be found on the way.

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## AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE.

### AN EXAMINATION ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

The whole world will soon enter upon the study of the life of the Christ as contained in the Gospel of Luke. The International Lesson Committee have with great wisdom planned for an entire year's study upon the greatest of all subjects. Two classes will engage in the study:

1) Those who have many times gone over the same ground, those to whom the story is familiar in all its details.

2) Those who, though not utter strangers to the subject, have nevertheless never carefully studied it.

The great purpose of the work of both classes should be to have as a result of their study (1) a reasonable familiarity with all the details of the life and work of Jesus; (2) a fair knowledge of the times in which Jesus lived, the customs and manners of the people; (3) a clear and definite conception of the methods of work employed by Jesus, and the great purpose of that work; (4) an acquaintance with the book of Luke as a literary production, its particular purpose, style of composition, etc., etc.

From the beginning the student's mind should be impressed with the idea that his work must be done in such a manner as that when finished he shall be in possession of certain tangible results. Why should an entire year be spent upon the subject, and at the end there be nothing to show for the labor bestowed?

In educational circles it is customary to hold *examinations* at the end of a particular course of study. Experience has shown that an examination is useful in several ways. (1) It calls for a review of all the work done; no one need be told that a review is a good thing; (2) It enables one to get a comprehensive grasp of the subject as a whole; (3) It is a test of the student's knowledge of the subject; after a period of study he ought to know something about the matter studied; does he? (4) It is a stimulus to better work for a student to have in mind that, at the close, he will be expected to stand a test; (5) In short, an examination, if properly prepared for and properly conducted, may render an invaluable service in securing better results in any work of an educational character.

In view of all these facts, the *American Institute of Sacred Literature*, proposes to all Sunday School classes, Bible clubs and individual students who shall take up for the year the study of the Gospel of Luke, wherever they may live and in whatever way they may study, an *examination* upon that book at the close of the period during which it will be studied. As to the character of the examination, the following points only may be noted here: